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the local conditions which hold the most important place in regional studies.

Excellent histories of many of the States in the Union have met the demand for regional studies in history. But almost nowhere has there been an attempt at similarly complete accounts either of the physical conditions which the pioneer met, or of the influences which these conditions have exerted over the subsequent development of the regions. To have such a series of regional geographies for each State or group of States in the country would mean a great stride toward a better and a more general understanding not only of the economic and the social development, but also of history and political conditions as well. Such studies should be of value, not alone to the student of geography, but also to the historian and the economist. They should be of value, not merely to the people of the State or region, but to every one who would gain an idea of the different elements on which the units of the nation have been built.

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## AN AMERICAN PANAMA.

SOME PERSONAL NOTES ON TROPICAL COLONIZATION AS AFFECTED  
BY GEOGRAPHIC AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS.

BY

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Three points of view are at present important in the discussion of our new acquisition, Panama:

First, the engineering problem;

Secondly, the conditions of life as affected by climate or geographical conditions;

Thirdly, the colonial aspect, or the relations of the future colony to the government responsible for its development.

As to the engineering point of view, I can say nothing at first hand; but, in view of the political acrimony just now creating a cloud of doubt about this great enterprise, I venture to affirm that, at least in the opinion of several of the most eminent engineers of this country, if not of the world, the task of digging a canal from Colon

to Panama offers no physical difficulty which would for a moment discourage men familiar with great engineering tasks of recent years in this country, such, for instance, as the New York Subway.

Notable it is, to be sure, that our great engineers are not crowding forward to offer themselves as servants of our Government in this crisis. On the contrary, they not only decline service, but they hesitate to express opinions in public, for fear of inviting the ill-will of politicians, who resent criticism.

Secondly, our discussion touches upon the condition of life in the tropics generally and Panama in particular, and here we must carefully sift evidence, because so many men who visit a tropical country for the first time are apt to measure things there exclusively by the standards to which they are accustomed in a northern climate.

For my part, I may be permitted to interject here that Panama is not the first tropical country that I have visited—that, indeed, I have made a study of nearly every tropical colony in the world, including the German islands of New Guinea, where I cruised alone in my canoe to places which the German Governor assured me no white man could approach without risk of being eaten up by cannibals.

This was my fourth visit to the Caribbean, and before these visits I had studied the negro as a labourer in every colony of South Africa, including the Portuguese Mozambique.

I had sailed my canoe around both Antigua and St. Thomas in the West Indies, in order to study the negro at closer range than is usually possible to the tourist, and had, besides, had opportunity of studying him in each of our own Gulf States at different times.

The labour problem is the great, if not the only, problem demanding serious and immediate attention at Panama, and it is one so intimately bound up with the future of Panama as a colony that it deserves scientific treatment, wholly divorced from the momentary needs of party politics.

To-day we have at the Isthmus a white population numbering only a few hundred, who are mainly from the Northern States of our Union, and who are engaged as inspectors and in clerical work generally. They live in the least unhealthy portions of the Zone, are paid in gold, while the negroes are paid in silver, and altogether represent the momentary aristocracy of our colony.

Then, we have the body of labourers or colonists who are almost wholly alien negroes from British islands—who speak only English, and who have been reared under a colonial system where the respect

for law is universal, where judges are appointed for life, and where political influence has never been suspected amongst those seated on the bench.

Note, then, that Panama so far has drawn no negroes from our own Southern States, but only negroes who have no votes on our territory, and, consequently, represent no political force.

Experience with negroes teaches that the success of planters depends largely upon the relative capacity of masters to make their workmen happy in their work. I have visited plantations practically equal in soil, climate, and number of hands, and yet while one landlord will praise his men and close his year's balance with a smile, the other will curse the negro as a stupid brute and find fault with everything—save himself.

This is almost universally seen in every country where the negro is the main labourer. I have noted it in tropical Africa no less than in different parts of the West Indies, and I am sure that hundreds of our Southern planters will confirm it within their own experience.

My stay on the Isthmus lasted two days—ten hours of one day and ten hours of the second day, with eight hours for sleep.

One day was a holiday, the next was a working day; so I saw my people at work and at play.

Of those two days I spent the major part in the swamp called Colon—a pest-breeding wallow nearly a mile long, immediately back of the show street which fronts the waters of the Caribbean Sea.

In this swamp I was accompanied by Mr. Tracy Robinson, who is one of the oldest residents on the Isthmus and also one of the most respected. He has published a volume of poems, and has been repeatedly invited to deliver the oration on national holidays by his American fellow-citizens.

My other companion into the swamp of Colon was Mr. Sands, our Secretary of Legation at Panama, a worthy representative of our country. With these two gentlemen I made many photographs showing the state in which several thousand negroes are living under conditions disgraceful to us as a Christian and progressive nation. The people in this swamp have come to the Isthmus at our invitation and have a right to expect the common decencies of life, such as water to drink, streets that can be used, and places where they may throw their sewage and excrement without leaving it to pile up at their very doors.

The climate is by many looked upon as the cause of the fevers at Panama, but this I venture to doubt. There are many analogies to Panama and Colon throughout the colonial world, and these an-

alogies, when studied historically, lead to the conclusion which harmonizes with experience, that tropical climate may be much modified by human foresight and energy.

For instance, Durban in Natal, which I visited in 1896, was already then a favorite seaside resort for the Boers of the Transvaal; and yet within the memory of men then living it had been a place notorious as a hotbed of fever.

To the late Sir Harry Escombe is mainly due the credit of having brought about the public sentiment which raised the necessary taxes to drain the swamps and thus abolish mosquitoes and fever at the same time.

We have but to drain the Colon swamp, and fevers will disappear, as they have from many other places situated in similar geographical positions.

To-day the Portuguese port of Delagoa Bay is suggestive of Colon in the filthy neglect of sanitary measures—yet Delagoa Bay is practically close neighbor to Durban. All she needs is a little British enterprise and honesty, and she, too, will become another health resort.

Demarara, at the mouth of the Essequibo, would be another Colon but for the far-sightedness of the original Dutch colonists in treating their swamps according to the example of the mother country; and the British, who now rule that rich dependency, have continued to keep it well drained, and, therefore, healthy. You do not hear any complaints about mosquitoes and malaria in Demarara.

The moral of all this is, that we might do well to send to some tropical colonies, where conditions are analogous, and borrow for our own use some administrators familiar with the problems confronting us here. Or, if that runs counter to our national pride, then let us do the next best thing and select for our managers, inspectors and bosses generally, not men from Ohio or Michigan, but rather draw our canalization forces from the Gulf States of the Union. Let us choose young men who have a good record as managers of plantations, who stand well with negroes, who know their habits and humours, who are honest and good-tempered, yet firm.

The negro is an easy man to work with if you understand him, and it is of the highest importance that we select for canal jobs white men who do know the negro; but, unfortunately for us, most of our white men who do know the negro have probably voted the Democratic ticket!

The geography of Panama as a colony is most encouraging—a

diversified landscape, abundantly watered and capable of growing almost everything demanded by reasonable colonists.

To-day we have not yet any laws under which a settler can acquire land or even a leasehold. Consequently, there is not yet a beginning of farming, and until this arrives we must expect high prices for provisions and consequent dissatisfaction amongst those who do not enjoy canned food in the tropics.

Under an honest and efficient colonial rule we may look forward to the building of roads throughout our new possession, the draining of all swamps, and the accurate surveying of the land, in order to encourage settlers who come for the purpose of providing fresh vegetables and dairy produce to the thousands already there and to the hundreds of thousands whom we may anticipate as the result of good administration.

It is easy now to look ahead and protect the people against the evils incident to land speculation. The Government should retain all rights as a paramount landlord, and permit people to purchase only on condition that in case they resell, then the Government shall be entitled to buy back the land at a just valuation, and not at the fancy price which tempts the land speculator.

Germany has wisely introduced this principle of land tenure in Kiao Chau, and, from what I am able to gather, it works admirably.

Then, too, tropical climates demand that white men who go there as colonists keep their bodies well toned up physically—for physical depression may soon be followed by mental depression, and then follows disease, and then, off for home, with a tale of the “horrible climate!”

Tropical colonies teach the lesson that the successful administrators are those who themselves take plenty of outdoor exercise each day and who insist upon corresponding exercise in their subordinates.

The Germans fail to get the best out of their colonies for the reason that their administrators are, as a rule, men with no interest in healthy sports, but inclined to spend their evenings round a beer table rather than on the polo field or in kicking a football.

On the canal Zone, although I went the whole length of the canal strip and back and talked with many employees there, I could find scant trace of any interest in out-door sports, so far as the Government administration is concerned.

Before the canal can be built the matter of making people contented on the Zone must be studied by those who have had previous experience with the elements of this problem.

The negroes who come to us must have their families, if they are to remain more than a few months.

Before we can make progress in this great work, we must face the truth and lay broad foundations. This is impossible if we continue to permit this work to be the sport of politicians and the jobbery which inevitably springs from an enterprise where there are half a dozen commanding generals, immense opportunities for mistakes, miles of red tape, and many millions of dollars yet to spend.

## GEOGRAPHICAL RECORD.

### AFRICA.

TWO ARTICLES ON THE MAHARI (dromedary or African camel)—one by Capt. Mathieu and the other by E. Michal, interpreter, etc.—deserve notice, the former for its information on reproduction and raising of the dromedary, the other for a detailed account of the diseases and accidents to which the animal is exposed. Not less than twenty-six infirmities or lesions are enumerated, and—what is more valuable still—the methods for relief used by the Arabs are circumstantially given. For zoological gardens or wherever attempts are made to introduce the camel away from its home, the article of Mr. Michal is of importance.—(*Bulletin of the Société de Géographie d'Alger et de l'Afrique du Nord, &c.*, 1905, third quarter.)

ACROSS MADAGASCAR.—An entertaining and matter-of-fact description of a journey from Tamatave to Maintirano in 1902, by E. F. Aside from pleasing descriptions, it contains some not indifferent data concerning the early history of the Hovas, the information (not new) that these did not by any means control the whole island, and considerable ethnologic information of a cursory kind. The opinion as to the value of Madagascar for France is certainly not exaggerated.—(*Bulletin, Société de Géographie d'Alger.*)

THE BERBER WOMAN IN ETHNOLOGY AND ALGERIAN HISTORY.—This post-humous paper of Lieut.-Col. Rinn deals with the position of woman among the Berbers, but begins with a defense of Mahommedanism in its relations to the female, asserting that "the supremacy of Islam in Berber society has frequently maintained and legitimized the part played by woman, in the ethnology and history of northern Africa." The interesting fact is established that the Berbers, in times long past, had matriarchy, the names of many of their subdivisions as well as tradition indicating descent in the female line. Follows a long list of women celebrated among the Berbers for remarkable actions, all given in support of the claim that Mohammedanism concedes to woman a much higher place than generally supposed. Since the author of this rather imperfect essay is no longer among the living: *De mortuis nihil nisi bene.*—(*Bulletin, Soc. de Géog. d'Alger.*)

A LIVING OKAPI SEEN.—Captain Boyd Alexander of the Alexander-Gosling Expedition, which arrived early in March at Bima in the Congo Free State, has